

SURVIVORS FOR JUSTICE

May 7, 2018

Hon. Jesse M. Furman
United States District Judge
Thurgood Marshall
United States Courthouse
40 Foley Square
New York, NY 10007

Re: David Carlebach

Dear Judge Furman:

I am writing to ask for leniency in Your Honor's sentencing of David. I was shocked to learn of the crimes David committed and, while I understand the need for him to be held accountable for them, know a different side of him. I am writing to offer a picture of the man I know David to be.

While I have known of David and his family my entire life, I got to know him well in 2005 when he and I discreetly worked together to assist a victim of childhood sex abuse within the Orthodox Jewish community. At that time this issue was barely discussed and both victims and those who spoke up in their defense were treated harshly. David, a member of a prestigious family, risked serious financial loss by getting involved since much of his clientele came from within this community and were his involvement in this issue to become known he would have been severely ostracized by the communal leadership.

Despite this risk to his reputation and livelihood, David immersed himself wholeheartedly in this effort. We soon learned that the problem of abuse and cover-up within the community was widespread and international in scope. The hundreds of hours David selflessly dedicated to helping victims—in New York, New Jersey, The UK, Israel and elsewhere--meeting with victims and professionals, strategizing on how to counter the backlash we were encountering, serving as a sounding board for ideas, etc. helped our initial effort succeed, inspired others to join in this battle and encouraged victims to step

forward. The positive impact his work has had is incalculable. Well over a hundred previously protected or unknown sex offenders were exposed. Many hundreds of victims have stepped forward and are now being treated with compassion and respect by a community that had shunned earlier victims. Communal leaders were finally forced to acknowledge the problem. A brief review of the article section of our website is proof of what David helped to accomplish. While there are but a handful of news articles on child sex abuse within this community dated prior to 2005, the number that follow his involvement exceed a thousand.

I did not consider the pressure David's pro bono work was placing on his practice. I should have been more thoughtful. David made it too easy to ask him for assistance and placed few limits on his availability. When he worked on this issue he made those he was helping feel as if this was the only thing he had any interest in, that it was the most important work he could be doing. His enthusiasm and dedication led to the formation of Survivors For Justice, an advocacy group for the survivors of sex abuse in the Orthodox Jewish world, the first organization of its kind.

David never asked for any recognition, thanks, remuneration, or even reimbursement of his expenses. I am not suggesting that the good work of the David I know negates the bad acts he has admitted to, but only that the David before the Court is anathema to the David I and so many others know. I respectfully suggest that incarcerating a man as capable of good as he for any longer than absolutely necessary may be a disservice to those he can do much to help. I respectfully suggest that the time David spent in Rikers has left an indelible impression on him and that if there is any alternative to further incarceration perhaps David, and certainly those who would benefit from his freedom, deserves the benefit of such alternatives.

Thank you for taking the time to read and consider my request.

By: 
Ben Hirsch, President